

Four Poem Sequence

1. in a café beside the Loing drinking coffee
mother of my saints sweet
lizard on my window
thoughts of yesterday early in the
morning
 i will settle myself for things to come

five fishermen in three boats
 in the distance trees
shine green in the sun
i see shade under them and cows eating grass
 it is sunday and peaceful
over the water the roof of the chateau
shimmers dry rot in the heat

black hairs on the lip of the
waitress her face cruel and witless
 she approaches the becoming gentleman
with the blonde she smiles there is a
smell of money in the air

enter a family the father
gray moustached somewhat distinguished
the mother flesh mountained
fish face fish lips
 the son dull and bored
says nothing

a pretty bathing-suited girl
lying between her father's legs
passes in a flat-bottomed boat
 white skin reflecting the sun
2. we drive each other desperate
with our common hopeless causes
 will you have another rum
friend? as you lean against
the dirty wall

 everyone is doomed but doesn't die
by bombs which must explode but haven't
though centuries back some decades ago
we had it all resolved
 the celebration of the end of things
like souls hearts and futures all
sensitive with great parties where all
booze flowed licitly and illicitly
with the changing times

3. as a young girl she would have made a handsome man

in the tired light under the dusky ceiling
the profile is still striking a lover of
plants and animals versed in their
daily rhythms dedicated
disciplined but it was not enough
parted from the blonde Christina she
showed her friends the verses and they
after the usual compliments seeing them
more clearly than she
indulged in a little private desperation
and hoped that the bottle she brought was
full and proofed

how will she feel tomorrow? she
will water the beloved
flowers at five am
or five minutes after
we depart

have a cigaret friends another
glass of rum there are people doomed who
do not die by a bomb which must explode
but hasn't now we'll ooze a bit of
sorrow and if we nudge each other
a little the bottle will soon be empty
tomorrow we'll take an aspirin

4. three times you stomped
on my liver
as it lay thudding on the floor
be afraid i tell you!

the cat is crazy turning in
circles too large
for the room
thrashing its tail
in the air!

take care! i'm going to
slap you right in the mouth
my hair is dancing on my head and
my eyes are caged lions!

i have never worked on
the thirty-third floor
of any building
nor like
winter-grimed pigeons
creaked my cold way
to blackened ledges

i saw a B-51 fly fly
around the light bulb
and asked myself: will
my sense of humor hold out?
the thing was big and black
and made a shocking noise in
the bones
the kind of fly that bites
a horse's ass
and spreads terror among
the anthrax-fearing!

Joe Kidgel killed cats with his foot
(while his buddies held them
well stretched out from head to tail)
Joe Kidgel was a football hero
of local importance
Joe Kidgel went to war --
was killed by a bomb
a merciful death as it
hit him right on the head
Joe Kidgel was a war hero
of local importance

Poem # 46

Ignore his situation
Keep the branding iron in your pocket
Who's good looks matter to the postman?
He delivers our mail
Do not ask for whom he tolls
... the piece of wood
on which the boy is working
was Abraham Lincoln

Poem # 49

Dead pigs hanging on the butcher-shop wall
small blue flowers in the butcher's nose
flutter gently only when he sneezes

Poem # 50

Tis a cold wind
that blows no toasty cornflakes
into our cardboard lives

— Harry Bell

Here & There, Europe